

Message Text

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FOLG TELE SENT ACTION DELHI INFO BOMBAY CALCUTTA. RPTD
FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE.

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IN

SUBJECT: DMK LEADER OPPOSES CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

1. ADDRESSING A MEETING ON "CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES"
ORGANIZED BY THE TAMIL NADU BRANCH OF "CITIZENS FOR
DEMOCRACY" (FOUNDED BY JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN) IN MADRAS
ON SEPTEMBER 17, ERA SEZHLYAN, LEADER OF THE DMK GROUP
IN LOK SABHA, STATED THAT "FREE NATIONAL DEBATE" ON THE
CONSTITUTIONAMENDMENT (44TH) BILL IS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER
"THE PREVAILING ATMOSPHERE OF THE EMERGENCY ESPECIALLY WHEN
SEVERAL OPPOSITION LEADERS, INCLUDING 59 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
ARE UNDER DETENTION"HE ALSO SAID THAT HE WAS INFORMED BY
THE ORGANIZERS OF THE MEETING THAT THE POLICE GAVE THEM PERMISSION
TO HOLD THE MEETING ON CONDITION THAT THE SPEAKERS SHOULD NOT SAY
"ANYTHING" ON "THE EMERGENCY, 20-POINT PROGRAM, PRESIDENT'S
RULE, THE PRIME MINISTER, ETC." SEZHLYAN WONDERED
HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE TO HAVE FREE DISCUSSION WITH THIS KIND
OF RESTRICTION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SOME TIME AGO
A "NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION"

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WAS FORMED WITH HIMSELF (SEZHLYAN) AND KRISHAN KANT (M.P.)

AS CONVENORS. INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS M.C. CHAGLA, H. V. KAMATH AND SHANTI BHUSHAN WERE MEMBERS. AFTER PRODUCING AN INTERIM REPORT, THEY WANTED TO HOLD A SEMINAR ON THE SUBJECT IN DELHI AND INVITED OUTSTANDING JURISTS SUCH AS FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT HIDAYATULLAH TO PARTICIPATE, BUT THE DELHI POLICE DID NOT GIVE PERMISSION. "WHERE IS FREEDOM OR DEMOCRACY IN THIS COUNTRY NOW?" SEZHIYAN ASKED.

2. SEZHIYAN STATED THAT HE WAS ONLY PASSING ON SOME OF HIS OWN CRITICISMS OF THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, BUT COULD NOT GIVE HIS PARTY'S STAND ON THIS ISSUE BECAUSE HE WAS NOT ABLE TO CONSULT WITH THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE DMK--SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL ARE IN DETENTION AND SEVERAL OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN PARLIAMENT ARE BEHIND BARS.

3. SEZHLYAN CRITICIZED SEVERAL CLAUSES OF THE CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL--IN PARTICULAR, ITS GOAL OF MAKING PARLIAMENT SUPREME. HE STATED THAT IF ALL THE LIMITATIONS ON PARLIAMENT WERE REMOVED AS PROPOSED, THIS DEVELOPMENT WOULD LEAD TO TYRANNY. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT WHICH HAS EXTENDED ITS OWN LIFE HAS NO RIGHT TO BRING ABOUT SUCH FAR-REACHING CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION.

4. "HIMMAT" EDITOR RAJ MOHAN GANDHI, WHO PRESIDED, SAID THAT "A LARGE NUMBER OF UNDEMOCRATIC AMENDMENTS WHICH ARE UNDEMOCRATICALLY BUNGLED IN AN UNDEMOCRATIC SPIRIT ARE PROPOSED TO BE PASSED BY AN UNDEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT." HE SAID THAT THE EMERGENCY IS NOT THE SEASON TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION SO RADICALLY AND WANTED THE CONGRESS TO WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT ELECTIONS, GIVING THE PEOPLE THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE AND SUFFICIENT TIME TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THE CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT PROPOSALS. HE STATED THAT THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT WHICH HAS OUTLIVED ITS TERM HAS NO RIGHT TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. HE ALSO SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE PRESS CENSORSHIP AND STATED THAT HIS JOURNAL IS ALSO BEING VERY MUCH HARASSED BY THE CENSORS. "THE PRESS IS VIRTUALLY GAGGED," HE SAID.

5. COMMENT: PERMISSION TO HOLD THE MEETING WAS GRANTED BY THE POLICE ON CONDITION THAT THE SPEAKERS WOULD NOT SAY ANYTHING ON THE "EMERGENCY, 20-POINT PROGRAM, PRESIDENT'S RULE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PRIME MINISTER, ETC." ALTHOUGH THERE WAS VERY LITTLE PUBLICITY, MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE ATTENDED AND SHOWED GREAT INTEREST IN THE SPEECHES. THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS WERE APPARENTLY CENSORED, AS NOTHING ON IT HAS APPEARED IN THE PAPERS.

SCOTT UNQUOTE

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